

The Bloomfield Gazette.

Office, -- At the Post Office.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1872.

CHRISTMAS.

CHRISTMAS, however old, is always new and welcome. We picture the old year, as working his tedious way along, with feeble frame and snowy locks; but his companion is young and cheerful, crowned with garlands and decked with robes of green. So gay and sportive is that man, with common consent, have named him "Merry Christmas." He is welcomed in the palace of the rich and the lonely dwelling of the poor; prayers and songs hail his advent; blushing is celebrated with festive honors; and he departs amid the rejoicings of the inmates.

It is right that it should be so; for of all days this is the greatest. Other holidays are limited in their sphere, being, at most, only of national significance, while Christmas is of world-wide interest. Christian nations regard it as the birthday of the founder of their religion, and believe the time is coming when it will be celebrated in all lands, by all peoples. In the fourth century, the 25th of December was agreed upon by the churches of the East and West as the day of Christ's nativity, and it has so been observed ever since.

Christmas has long been celebrated in story, verse and song. For ages there has been a strictly Christian literature, some of the richest poetry in our language being in commendation of our Savior's birth. One of Milton's sweetest hymns is that on "The Morning of Christ's Nativity," beginning:

It was the winter wild,
While the heath-born child
All mealy wrapt in the rude manger lies:
Nature, in awe to him,
Had doffed her gaudy trim;

With her great Master so to sympathize.

We do not know of any better way to begin Christmas than to read that hymn in connection with the Gospel history. The ancient Latin hymnology of the Church abounds with hymns on the Nativity, the pleasure of reading which would repay one for the labor of learning the language.

There is a comparatively modern species of literature no less attractive to the multitude, consisting of Christmas stories. Everybody has read Dickens'; and at this season his name will be recalled in thousands of homes that have been made pure and happy by his ready pen and loving heart. The demand for this class of reading is so decided that our newspapers and journals publish stories expressly for the season. In the hands of good and wise men, this literature can do more good than thousands of sermons and didactic essays; for it will be read and remembered by many whom sermons never reach.

And what shall we say of song? The silence of the day we commemorate was broken by celestial strains:

Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made,
But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellation set,
And the well-balanced world on hinges hung.

The burden of the song was, "Peace on earth, good will to men;" and the voices of myriads have continued the glorious strain. Some of the sublimest music composed by the masters is that prepared for the celebration of Christmas; and many of our churches, at this season, pay especial attention to this part of public worship.

The modest carol must not be overlooked; though not pretentious, it is a great favorite in families and Sunday Schools. During the middle ages these carols were sung by bishops and the lower clergy, joined by the populace; and the songs were enlivened by dances and the music of tambours, guitars, violins, and organs. Many collections have been made of these mediæval carols; some of which, modernized, are now sung in our schools and families.

It is a cause for rejoicing that the observance of this day is growing in favor with us. There have been--they still are--churches where greens and flowers are never seen; where the observance of Christmas is but a relic of the darkest ages. But these notions are becoming dispelled by the irresistibly sweet influences of the season; and men are learning to recognize the gentle spirit of Christianity wherever it is found, and to believe that no denomination has an exclusive right to any excellence. Let us all accept the injunction, "Peace on earth, good will to men." All hates must be buried; all wrongs forgiven; all friendships cherished: for He whose name day we celebrate, above all other things, taught forgiveness, and set us the example.

The method of celebrating Christmas in the early Church, was to spend the first part of the day in public worship; the rest was devoted to festivities. These latter too often degenerated into rude excess; but the principle is the right one. After having returned our thanks for God's best gift to man, it is proper and profitable to join our families and friends in social intercourse. Among our New England brethren it is customary to do that on Thanksgiving day; and men will leave important business, and travel hundreds of miles, to be at the old home on that occasion. This is good; we would not have it otherwise. But is not Christmas still more suitable? If one must give way, let it not be Christmas. The Sunday schools have decided the matter, as far as they are concerned. If it is considered a bad sign of a school's vitality, if it allows

the day to pass without its Christmas Tree, Santa Claus, or an equivalent.

Fashions change in this, as in other matters. The Yule-log no longer burns in Merry England; and the children's stockings are seldom hung up by the fire-place in this country; but the holly is popular as ever, and Christmas trees are every year in greater demand. We confess to a liking for the stocking; some of our happiest experience is connected with it. But if our youngsters like the tree better, they shall have it; their children will want a change, and the good old fashion will return.

One of the most prominent of the festivities accompanying Christmas is the custom of giving gifts. There are few who do not join in this pleasant observance, where parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors, vie with each other in kindly, and very often costly, remembrances. Weeks and even months before, nimble fingers are engaged in making all kinds of hand-work; and money is hoarded up to make purchases for friends. This with many persons is carried further than their means will justify; others limit the tokens of affection to their own families, or intimate friends. Still there are many whose hearts are open to the wants and sufferings of the poor; and who seek them out to comfort and relieve. Let us on this joyous occasion obey the precept of Him whose birthday we commemorate, remembering how he said, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind and thou shalt be blessed: for they cannot recompence thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

THINKING ALONE.

HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE.

OTHER towns have their men of mark--those whose distinguishing characteristics have given them creditable and extended notoriety; why may not Bloomfield? To be sure, she has not been accustomed to blow her own trumpet, or to count applause from abroad. Nestling here among the hills, indeed, she has been so well satisfied with her position, so unmoved by the turmoil and vociferation of the world beyond, so self-complacent in her onward, *centennial* progress, she scarcely knows that she has any special merits or suspects it possible that any of her citizens can have a special claim to distinction! The consequence is that a public man, or aspiring man, is half buried here; not, indeed, for lack of appreciation, but for want of cordial, encouraging, enthusiastic support.

It is an old and authentic saying that "a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house." But if one has no opportunity to manifest himself beyond his own home sphere, must he then live and die without credit and without laurels? We admit the adage has too many verifications to doubt its validity, but we desire to protest against its justification. Opening talent, and the best promises of capacity are sometimes blighted in the embryo by lack of countenance and encouragement at home. So also those who are well calculated to be useful in church, or state, in society, or profession, frequently dishearten and fail in their efforts to develop a latent talent for want of the proper incentive which kindred and friends could wisely give but mistakenly withhold.

The foundation of true greatness is intelligence and goodness of heart. Few communities, we are fair to believe, are more generally pervaded with these elements than Bloomfield. Why should we ignore these valuable qualities because, so forth, the worthy possessor is our kinsman or neighbor? Why should we not recognize goodness and scholarship, merit and talents, self-denying labors and consecration to his calling, in the pastors and physicians of our town as readily as we do in strangers and non-residents?

We have often thought it a very mistake to withhold merited praise and refuse to set forth the capabilities and virtues of his kinsman because of the relationship. It is beautiful, and commands the admiration of every right-minded person, to behold appropriate deference, respect, affection, confidence, and suitable commendations accorded by members of a domestic circle or of a church family to their honored head and to each other. In fact the highest testimony we can have of an individual character, and the strongest support and encouragement he himself can receive, are derived from the known and expressed sentiments of his own family first, and next of his own neighbors.

We have been led into these preliminary reflections while penning for our readers a few sketchy observations in another column under the caption "Home Celebrities." We purpose continuing them from time to time until the material is exhausted in Bloomfield and Montclair, and that will not be very soon, we think.

CALDWELL.

In our last issue we mentioned the destruction of the Presbyterian Church by fire two weeks previous. We have now to announce the erection of a new temporary chapel capable of accommodating about 450 people. It is comfortably seated, carpeted and warmed, and was opened with divine service last Sunday. The promptness and taste with which this necessary convenience has been supplied speaks well for the intelligent and consistent enterprise of Caldwell people.

NAMES OF STREETS.

MESSRS. EDITORS: I propose to trespass on your limited space, in reviewing an article in your issue of Dec. 14, under the caption of "Names of Streets," but before doing so would say to the writer that his "Pembulations" have attracted considerable attention, and will undoubtedly result in accomplishing what he much desires, and which is a small neglect, but not of those he charges it upon.

If I mistake not the meaning of the writer, it is that the Town Committee are responsible, and therefore, remiss in their duties.

In finding fault, it is well to remember the receipt given for cooking a hare, and how let me say I am not, never have been, and never expect, to be a member of that much-maligned body, the Township Committee, but we will see what are the duties of the Town Committee. All the powers they can legally exercise are well defined by law. In Nixon's Digest, page 979, section 12, we find: "Which Committee shall have authority, and it is hereby rendered their duty to examine, inspect, and report to the annual or other town meetings the accounts and vouchers of the township officers, and to superintend the expenditure of any money raised by tax, for the use of the township, or which may arise from the balance of the accounts of any of the township officers." There are other sections which refer to special duties, in regard to taxes, Roads, Line-Fences, &c. By recent special laws their powers have been increased only as regards sidewalks, and neither in the general nor special laws is there a single line or word which gives them power to expend a cent for the purpose of marking the names of streets.

We are to be congratulated on the efficient and judicious committees which, as a township, it has been our good fortune to secure to manage our affairs for a number of years past. At our annual town (spring) elections, it is voted how much, and for what purpose, we will raise money, and even then the purposes are regulated by our laws. The suggestion of signs necessitate the expenditure of money, and as there is no provision for it the committee have no power. The remedy is to call town meetings, discuss what is needed in way of town improvement, prepare the law, and our accommodating Legislature will pass it for us.

There is another point I will, with your permission, touch upon, your "pembulators" spirit is in the improvement of this town, but it is evident to me he is not advised of the facts in the case. The streets, for the most part, are named, many of them by the Township Committee. The "lane" he speaks of "by the Methodist church," is Park Street, and some other unknown or unnamed street parallel with and west of Broad Avenue, (street) is known and named as State street. At Broad Street, at the commencement of this lane stands a street lamp on a substantial cast-iron post, the first street lamp erected in Bloomfield, if I mistake not; and at the junction of this "lane," and the "unknown or unnamed street," is placed another lamp, whose light is remarkable for its brilliancy and for the regularity of its being lighted, for which the care-taker of it deserves credit. And here comes a little joke: this lamp has been up about 4 years, and on a ground glass upon the "lane" side can be seen these symbols--PARK Street, and, on the appropriate side, STATE Street; so that night or day, he who passes may know upon what street he is. In the immediate neighborhood lives the Town Clerk, whom I would here thank for his kindness for this lamp stands a street lamp on a substantial cast-iron post, the first street lamp erected in Newark, if I mistake not; and at the junction of this "lane," and the "unknown or unnamed street," is placed another lamp, whose light is remarkable for its brilliancy and for the regularity of its being lighted, for which the care-taker of it deserves credit. And here comes a little joke: this lamp has been up about 4 years, and on a ground glass upon the "lane" side can be seen these symbols--PARK Street, and, on the appropriate side, STATE Street; so that night or day, he who passes may know upon what street he is. 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